



NAVAL AIR ENGINEERING STATION

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PRESS RELEASE

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Rail Line Available for Joint Service Ventures

Navy Lakehurst Completes Soil Transport

AUGUST 23, 2004, LAKEHURST, NJ – Signs posted around Navy Lakehurst designating the route for safe transport of contaminated soil from the Boeing Michigan Aeronautical Research Center (BOMARC), originating at Fort Dix in Plumsted Township, are slated to be taken down following the successful completion of a cleanup effort which solved an environmental problem for the state which has been in existence for over four decades.

“We helped rid New Jersey of a hazard without putting the local population at risk,” emphasized CAPT Mark Bathrick, Navy Lakehurst commanding officer. “We kept it off the public roads because the bases [Dix/Lakehurst/McGuire] are all connected across a single 42,000 acre parcel. With the success of this mission we have again proven our ability to cooperate with each other and with our community neighbors to undertake complex projects and see them through to a satisfactory conclusion,” CAPT Bathrick added.

The Air Force, in partnership with the Navy, transported and disposed of over 22,000 cubic yards of plutonium-contaminated soil and debris from the BOMARC site, one of eight Cold War-era nuclear missile sites located around the country.

In June 1960, a fire destroyed a nuclear warhead equipped missile at the BOMARC facility. Although no explosion resulted, damage to the structure released plutonium into the environment that was further spread by fire suppression activities.

“For over two years the Air Force and the Navy have collaborated to safely and successfully transport the contaminated soil,” said Mike Figura, an environmental engineer at Navy Lakehurst who oversaw the BOMARC cleanup project here on station.

According to Figura, although the BOMARC contamination is of the lowest levels of radioactive waste, concern for the safety of the general public prompted this particular partnership between the neighboring bases. “Although Navy Lakehurst has not had active rail service for more than twenty years, we still retained a railroad right-of-way that connected to the same Conrail the Air Force wanted to use,” he said. “The Navy allowed the Air Force to rebuild our rail line and extended it within our fence line so they could truck the waste through DoD property, avoiding public roads and private residences.”

Rebuilding the rail line within the base’s fence line, said Figura, provided added security for the waste while it was transferred to railcars prior to shipment.

Sixty-five shipments of the contaminated material were transported without a single incident. “The Joint Navy-Air Force environmental team’s vigilance made sure everything was handled properly,” said Bathrick. “That ensured the safety of our teammates here on base as well.”

With the successful accomplishment of the BOMARC remediation mission, Lakehurst’s attention now is turning toward utilizing the rail line for additional joint service ventures. “We are going to continue to build on this proven capability,” said Bathrick, who envisions using the line as part of a Dix-Lakehurst-McGuire and Naval Weapons Station Earle mobilization hub with the potential to support rapid deployments of Army equipment from Fort Dix via rail to the pier at Naval Weapons Station Earle.